



The Honourable Paul Anastassiou KC
Commissioner of Inquiry (Queensland's Child Safety System)
GPO Box 783
Brisbane Qld 4000

Via email only: info@childsafetyinquiry.qld.gov.au

30 July 2025

Dear Mr Anastassiou KC,

**Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's broken Child Safety System
Initial Submission**

The purpose of this letter is to provide a brief submission to the Inquiry and to extend our support for the work being undertaken on this very important topic of children's welfare.

About Us

Adopt Change believes that every child has the right to grow up in a safe, nurturing and stable family home and that all families need the appropriate supports for children to thrive.

Adopt Change works towards every child and young person having access to a safe, nurturing and stable family upbringing. We recognise the impact of childhood trauma and provide a number of services and education so that children and families can be supported and thrive. We also work with government, sector and community to seek changes to legislation and policies to better provide for children and families.

We recognise the importance of relational permanency for positive life outcomes. We support capacity building of families to ensure that vulnerable children are able to remain within their birth family where possible. When that is not possible or safe, we advocate for other permanent options, including adoption where appropriate.

Where possible, Adopt Change contributes to systemic change by drafting written submissions, working with government on developing policies and highlighting the need for increased support for foster and kinship carers.



Our Concerns

Residential Care:

We are deeply concerned about the increasing use of non-family based placements across all jurisdictions in Australia, especially in Queensland. There has been a sharp increase in the reliance on residential homes in Queensland and we support any inquiry to bring about considerable change to the high use of residential care.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022-2023 data shows that Queensland has 1761 children and young people in residential careⁱ which is double that of any other state (even compared to New South Wales which has considerably more children in care overall [14,720 NSW/ 9832 Qld]).

The right to love and be loved is paramount. No matter a child or young person's circumstance, they deserve to be raised in a loving, home-based environment. This consideration should be key when determining the care environment for a child or young person.

Support of carers:

Consistent with national trends, Queensland is losing foster carers faster than they can recruit new carers. In the financial year ending 2018, there were 2617 foster carer households in Queensland. In contrast, in the financial year ending 2023 there were only 1854 foster carer households with a placementⁱⁱ. This is despite the number of children and young people in care steadily increasing over that same period of time.

Foster carers need consistent, practical and emotional supports to remain in the system long term. This includes financial assistance that reflects the true cost of care, access to timely respite and specialist therapeutic services for children with complex needs. Carers require clear and responsive communication from caseworkers, inclusion in decision-making and training tailored to managing trauma and challenging behaviours. Peer support networks and recognition of carers as valued partners in the child protection system are also critical to reducing burnout and ensuring placement stability.

Adoption:

In July 2020 we wrote to the Queensland Parliament with our views on the proposed *Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 Qld*. You can view our submission on our [website](#). This included supporting amendments to the *Adoption Act 2009 Qld*.

We understand anecdotally that there have only been 3 known carer adoptions in Queensland over the last 5 years despite there being 88 known carer adoptions nationally in the year ending 30 June 2024ⁱⁱⁱ (official data does not reveal a state-by-state breakdown).

Although the legislative framework provides for adoption from out-of-home care, there is a clear gap between policy intent and casework practice. Consequently, children and young people who have no realistic prospect of returning to their family of origin are not consistently provided with the opportunity for permanent and stable homes.



Support

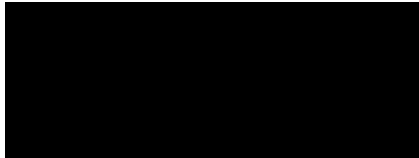
There are many other topics we wish to address with the inquiry, including:

- The Deputy Coroners findings in the Mason Jet Lee case which suggested increased use of adoption for children in the out of home care system.
- Barriers to adoption and permanent care orders, including workforce attitudes, legal processes and lack of family-finding or permanency planning expertise.
- Improving the support provided to foster carers to ensure they can continue to deliver safe, stable and high-quality care
- Increased independent oversight into casework practices and decision-making transparency.

Once further calls for submissions are made, we will address the topics above in more detail.

Adopt Change supports this inquiry and is committed to assisting the inquiry in any way possible. Adopt Change would welcome the opportunity to further discuss the role we can play to support major social change for children in Queensland and looks forward to the opportunity to provide more detailed submissions in due course.

Sincerely,



Renée Leigh (Carter)
Chief Executive Officer, Adopt Change

ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Child Protection Australia 2022-2023 updated Feb 2025, [website](#), accessed 22 April 2025, data table S5.3.

ⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Child Protection Australia, Data Tables for years 2018 ([website](#)) and 2023 ([website](#)) accessed 22 July 2025.

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Adoptions Australia, updated 4 April 2025, [website](#), accessed 22 July 2025, data table S25.